United Nations S/PV.8268

# Security Council

Seventy-third year

*Provisional*

**8268**th meeting
Thursday, 24 May 2018, 10.25 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Ms. Wronecka | (Poland) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Soliz |
| | China | Mr. Zhang Dianbin |
| | Côte d'Ivoire | Mr. Djédjé |
| | Equatorial Guinea | Mr. Esono Mbengono |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Tumysh |
| | Kuwait | Mr. Almunayekh |
| | Netherlands | Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren |
| | Peru | Mr. Meza-Cuadra |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Polyanskiy |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Hickey |
| | United States of America | Ms. French |

## Agenda

The situation in Burundi

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in Burundi**

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kafando.

**Mr. Kafando** (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Security Council on recent developments in Burundi.

On 17 May, the people of Burundi voted in favour of a new Constitution. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which announced provisional results on 21 May, of the 4,768,148 people who voted, 73.25 per cent voted in favour of the new Constitution, as opposed to the 19.34 per cent who voted against it. Blank ballots totalled 4.11 per cent, and abstentions 3.28 per cent, with a total voter participation of 96.24 per cent. Once again, I point out that information was provided by CENI. Overall, the referendum took place in a calm environment despite many irregularities and incidents reported by opposition and civil society representatives. CENI itself also reported several incidents that, in its view, were not such to influence the definitive results of the voting.

During my briefing on 25 February (see S/PV.8189), I shared the concerns of the Secretary-General, who had stressed in his report (S/2018/89) the need for the Government to seek the broadest consensus possible on an issue as crucial as amending the Constitution for the future — and the very fate — of Burundi. The Secretary-General underscored in his report the spirit of consensus that prevailed in the negotiations and the adoption of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the 2005 Constitution that resulted from it.

Now that the country is moving towards another important phase in its history, we expect a strong signal from the Burundian authorities in favour of resuming the inter-Burundian dialogue under the aegis of the East African Community. Reviving that dialogue would make it possible for Burundians to discuss together the challenges they face in a climate of mutual trust. It is important to reiterate at this point that it is only through an inclusive dialogue that Burundians will reach sustainable solutions to the current crisis. Without an inclusive dialogue, there is a risk that the opposition's contesting of the results of the referendum will further polarize an already tense political situation, characterised by human rights violations and other abuses, as well as the deterioration of the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation.

In that connection, I would like to draw the attention of Council members to the expulsion of human rights experts deployed in the framework of the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, which the Group of African States in Geneva endorsed on 29 September. Their visas were cancelled by the Government on 26 April when they were already in Burundi. I call on the Burundian authorities to facilitate the return of those experts and to renew cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The security situation in Burundi is generally calm, although there have been isolated grenade attacks and there continue to be reports of the discovery of dead bodies, including individuals in military uniforms. The Government should be encouraged to continue its efforts to restore security throughout the national territory. In that regard, I welcome the measures taken against certain forms of violence that were observed before and during the election campaign. The events that occurred on 11 May in the commune of Buganda, in the province of Cibitoke, which we condemned at the United Nations, during which 26 people, including women and children, were killed by unidentified armed men, reminds us that, even though there is general calm at the security level, the environment remains volatile.

The humanitarian situation is undergoing significant developments, but it is still a cause for concern. Many Burundians continue to live in refugee camps, particularly in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I welcome the efforts made by Burundi and Tanzania, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and within the framework of the tripartite agreement, which have already enabled over 13,000 Burundians to voluntarily return to their homes. Those efforts must be continued.

The situation I have just described highlights the relevance of continuing the inclusive dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community. Council members will recall that during the nineteenth summit of the East African Community, held in Uganda on 23 February, Heads of State of the subregion strongly recommended continued dialogue facilitated by former President Benjamin Mkapa and the mediation of President Museveni. The Summit also requested the facilitator to make every effort to convene the fifth session of the dialogue as soon as possible.

In response to the facilitator's invitation of 25 April, the Government of Burundi indicated that it would not take part in any dialogue session before the constitutional referendum was held. In that context, the Conseil national pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi et la restauration de l'état de droit questioned the appropriateness and relevance of a dialogue after a referendum that was supposed to bury the Arusha Agreement. Consultations should be held in the next few days with a view to relaunching the dialogue. I remain convinced that an inclusive dialogue remains the only path to a sustainable political settlement of the political, socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges Burundi has faced since 2015. Among those challenges is the preparation and success of inclusive, credible and transparent elections in 2020. In that regard, the Council could renew its full support to the region, in particular to the mediation led by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and to the facilitator, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, with the support of the African Union and the United Nations.

**The President**: I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

**Mr. Lauber**: At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council on behalf of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and for the excellent cooperation between the Council and the configuration.

As per established practice, this statement has been approved by the members of the PBC configuration, including the country concerned, Burundi.

Today's briefing gives me an opportunity to inform the Council about my latest visit to Burundi, which took place in late March, and on developments that occurred after my visit. At the end, I will formulate some recommendations regarding international engagement with Burundi. I briefed the PBC Burundi configuration about the outcome of my visit on 16 April.

From 27 to 30 March, I visited Burundi for the sixth time in my capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. The visit allowed me to get a first-hand impression of the situation on the ground, to maintain contact with the Government and other national stakeholders, to advocate for renewed dialogue and cooperation between the Government and its international partners and to identify further avenues for PBC engagement with Burundi. At the time of my visit, the security situation in the country was generally calm.

During my visit, I was received by His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi; the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation; the Minister of Finance, Budget and Privatization; the members of the National Independent Electoral Commission; the President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; leaders of three political parties; the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region; representatives of the private sector; the United Nations country team; the International Committee of the Red Cross; the diplomatic community and a group of local economists and historians.

My visit was an opportunity to learn more about the preparations for the constitutional referendum, which took place on 17 May. The Independent National Electoral Commission explained how it was registering voters both for the referendum and already for the elections of 2020 and how the referendum would be conducted. I underlined in those contacts that the referendum should take place in a democratic and open environment and without any incidents. I also invited the Government to reflect on whether Burundi may require international electoral assistance for the elections of 2020.

On 29 March, I met leaders of three political parties: the ruling party the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, the Union pour le progrès national and Agathon Rwasa. They all agreed that Burundi's political actors should define the path towards the elections of 2020 in a joint road map. Such a road map would include benchmarks aimed at ensuring that the elections will be free, fair, transparent, peaceful and fully inclusive, and engage the participation of all political parties.

The serious economic challenges that Burundi is facing were another key subject of my conversations. Government officials called upon Burundi's partners to focus more on mid- and long-term socioeconomic development than on humanitarian assistance. The Government informed me that it is currently drafting a new national development plan, which might be published before the summer.

Burundi's international partners reiterated their readiness to support Burundi with regard to both socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges. They expressed their wish to be informed about the national development plan as early as possible in order to adapt their development strategies to national priorities. Burundi's international partners and representatives of the private sector referred to certain challenges for economic engagement, including the lack of foreign currency and difficulties in obtaining bank loans.

In my conversation with the President of the Republic, I emphasized that the PBC remains committed to facilitate dialogue between the Government and its international partners. In that regard, I suggested organizing another round of socioeconomic consultations in Bujumbura, which could involve such additional partners as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union and bilateral donors. Burundi's national development plan might serve as a basis for that conversation. The President expressed his interest in the initiative, including the participation of additional partners.

During my stay, high-ranking officials from Burundi, Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a tripartite agreement on the return of Burundian refugees from Tanzania. Priority for repatriation will be given to those 19,148 refugees whose registered intention to return has already been verified by UNHCR.

With regard to the humanitarian response plan for 2018, the Government reiterated its view that the plan contained exaggerated numbers and that there had not been sufficient consultation on it with national authorities. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had launched the plan in February 2018. Its total volume of $141.8 million is currently covered at the rate of only 2.9 per cent. I told the Government and its humanitarian partners that a swift agreement on the humanitarian response plan will allow for the mobilization of additional resources. I also offered the PBC Burundi configuration as a platform to generate broader support for the plan.

When I met the President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I learned about the impressive progress made in this area in recent months. The Commission has already collected more than 45,000 testimonies and worked in 16 of the 18 provinces of Burundi. Among the challenges that the Commission is facing are time pressure, the security of data and the question of accountability.

In my meeting with the President, I recommended an extension of the mandate of the Commission by one year, until the end of 2019, in accordance with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. I indicated that the PBC could help mobilize international technical and financial assistance for reconciliation efforts in Burundi. As in previous meetings, the President insisted on the importance of national reconciliation. He responded positively to the suggestions that the mandate of the Commission be extended and that international expertise be mobilized.

In the past few days, representatives of the United Nations country team and United Nations officials in New York informed me of the following developments that had occurred after the conclusion of my visit.

On 20 April, President Nkurunziza appointed five new Ministers, increasing the Cabinet from 20 to 21 members. Four Ministers were replaced, including Foreign Minister Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, who was succeeded by Ezéchiel Nibigira. The campaign for the constitutional referendum started on 1 May. According to various observers, the environment of the campaign and the referendum was relatively calm. At the same time, I received reports that included allegations of intimidation and repression against opponents of the constitutional changes. On 11 May, as the Special Envoy mentioned before me, 26 people were killed in

a violent attack in the village of Ruhagarika, in north-west Burundi, by unidentified perpetrators, which was an assault that was broadly condemned by national and international actors. The international community continued to follow developments in Burundi attentively and in a constructive manner. In view of the constitutional referendum, the African Union and the European Union, in their capacity as guarantors of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, encouraged Burundi's Government to respect the spirit and the letter of the Agreement.

I also received an update on the implementation of Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 36/2, which had been presented to the HRC on 28 September 2017, by African countries, including Burundi. As mentioned by the Special Envoy, the three human rights experts who had been mandated by the HRC resolution to determine facts and circumstances entered Burundi in February. However, they were unable to conduct their work and left the country after one month. In view of Burundi's support for the HRC resolution and its commitment to cooperation with the three experts, the window of opportunity for the mission remains open. According to United Nations officials, it would be advisable to conduct the mission as soon as possible to allow the three experts to present their report to the Human Rights Council at its next session in June.

Based on my conversations in Burundi and New York, I draw the following conclusions with regard to international engagement with Burundi.

First, the international community should continue to follow developments in Burundi attentively and take all aspects of the current situation into account. In doing so, there is a need for coherence among United Nations actors and the international community, including regional and subregional actors, and for finding common ground with the Government in order to build trust and a better sense of partnership.

Secondly, the mediation efforts of the East African Community, led by President Museveni of Uganda and by former President Mkapa of Tanzania, continue to deserve our full support.

Thirdly, the upcoming national development plan may offer a basis for a renewed conversation between the Government and its international partners. I am therefore planning to organize another round of the socioeconomic dialogue between Burundi and its partners in 2018, in cooperation with the Government of Burundi and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. The involvement of partners such as the IMF, the European Union and bilateral donors that had not participated in the Bujumbura round tables last year seems crucial to me. In my view, such a dialogue session has the potential to foster confidence between Burundi and its partners.

Fourthly, besides mid- and long-term socioeconomic cooperation, the international community should not neglect the immediate humanitarian needs in Burundi. The configuration should continue to encourage cooperation between the Government and its humanitarian partners, with a view to addressing the most urgent needs of the population, in particular in the areas of basic social and health services, food security and protection.

Fifthly, the significant gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement must not be undermined. One of the advantages of a road map to 2020 among political actors would be that it could yield a broadly shared understanding of how the gains of Arusha can be preserved, especially in view of the elections of 2020.

Sixthly, the international community should continue to support national reconciliation efforts and follow the ongoing reconciliation process in Burundi attentively.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Lauber for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his informative briefing and for his commitment. I am also grateful to my Swiss colleague, Mr. Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his very useful briefing.

France takes note of the results of the referendum. Although the elections were held in relative calm, as has been said, we deplore the fact that the campaign took place in a climate clouded by intimidation and various threats of violence against those opposed to constitutional reform. The revision of the Constitution introduces amendments that run counter to the Arusha Accords. Indeed, if care is not taken, it may begin to unravel the Accords, which have been the backbone of a decade of peace in Burundi. The institutionalized

system of power-sharing between the various elements of the Burundian community has been put in doubt, and the mechanisms for protecting the Tutsi minority have either been weakened or are disappearing. In our view, this reform will not help to resolve the crisis that the country has been mired in since 2015.

We therefore remain very concerned about the political impasse and the security situation in Burundi. Faced with the impossibility of dialogue and a total shutdown of the political arena, the most radical opposition factions have been tempted to resort to armed struggle. In the ruling party, the Imbonerakure militias are playing an increasingly significant part in intimidating and repressing any dissenting voices and are difficult to control. The situation is therefore at risk of deteriorating and the status quo is not sustainable in the long term. The Ruhagarika massacre of 11 May, in which 27 civilians were murdered, is yet another new and tragic illustration of that.

We must break out of the current vicious circle. The dialogue facilitated by the East African Community has so far failed, mainly due to obstruction by the Burundian authorities. However, the priority must remain to launch a genuine inclusive national dialogue, without conditions or exclusions, that gives voice to the aspirations of every element of Burundian society. That priority is inseparable from the issue of respect for human rights, which is also worrying. An inclusive dialogue can be possible only if the Government makes the right moves, including enabling the opposition, the media and civil society to play their part without being undermined. We also expect robust demonstrations of regional support to ensure that this dialogue can truly take place.

In this difficult context, we call on all Burundian parties to return to the spirit of consensus that led to the conclusion of the Arusha Accords and on their guarantors to mobilize in the quest for a political solution to the crisis. The necessary regional leadership for the situation in Burundi must accompanied by close monitoring on the part of the Council. In Burundi's very volatile situation, the Arusha Accords are now more than ever the compass that must guide the efforts of the Burundian parties and the international community in the service of Burundi and its stability.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Michel Kafando and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their illuminating briefings on the situation. We firmly believe that respect for the constitutional order of every country defines and sustains modern States today and thereby guarantees their stability and plurality.

The results of Burundi's constitutional referendum of 17 May, with the participation of 26 political parties, reaffirm the will of the people and define the determination of the Burundian authorities and the majority of the Burundian population to advance towards an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue and political stability. The fact that the referendum was held without major incident is testament to the overall improvement in the country's situation.

In that connection, we call on all parties to abstain from taking actions that could be counterproductive. We believe that the provisional results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission on Monday, 21 May, which show a 73.26 per cent vote in favour of the new Constitution of Burundi and a mere 18 per cent against, with a high participation rate, represent a solid foundation for elections to be held in 2020. We believes that those results express the will of the people and that this decision lies exclusively within the purview of Burundi's national sovereignty. That is to say, we see this as an internal Burundian issue and a decision that will ensure the country's long-term stability. Similar processes have been carried out in other countries without major problems. In that regard, we believe that all necessary precautions and preventive measures should be taken to optimize the subsequent processes. The Council should continue to promote a spirit of impartiality and negotiated settlement by fostering and calling for inter-Burundian dialogue.

Equatorial Guinea has always believed in and supported the mediation efforts of all international, regional and subregional organizations together with those of Burundi's national political actors. That is the only way to ensure a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Burundi. That political process must be based on respect for democratic principles and values and the promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms. In that regard, we call on all Burundi's political actors to continue to make efforts to establish and build trust in order to advance a comprehensive, frank and transparent national dialogue that can bring national unity and cohesion. In that effort, we believe that the Government of Burundi must assume a leadership role

and take appropriate measures to maintain the country's unity and build a national reconciliation process. All such efforts should have the backing of the Council and the international community.

**Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren** (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks Special Envoy Kafando and Ambassador Lauber for their illuminating briefings. The Netherlands has been closely following the political climate in Burundi, since we are very concerned about the consequences of the potential political tensions for the population of Burundi and, in particular, for the security situation. I would like to draw the Council's attention to three aspects: first, the incidents related to the referendum; secondly, the ongoing need for inter-Burundian dialogue; and thirdly, the importance of the Arusha Accords.

Despite the absence of serious violence, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has taken note of the various incidents reported during the elections, such as denying accredited opposition observers access to polling stations or arresting them, and intimidating Burundian citizens in and around polling stations, including through the presence of members of the ruling party's youth league at some polling stations. We condemn such acts around the referendum process, which may have harmed a climate conducive to free choice. We expect the Burundian Government to ensure that any action based on the referendum, including the process of formalizing constitutional amendments, will be conducted on the basis of a broad consensus on the part of all stakeholders and in line with the relevant provisions of the current Constitution.

Despite the current impasse, the Netherlands continues to give its full support to the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community. A political solution developed through constructive and inclusive dialogue remains the most sustainable and viable way out of the political crisis in the country. We call on the Burundian Government to allow the political arena to be opened up in the post-referendum phase by ensuring circumstances that are more conducive to peaceful dialogue and contributing to positive efforts aimed at helping Burundi and its partners combat the country's persistent poverty. The Kingdom of the Netherlands fears that the risk of violence in Burundi continues. In that regard, we condemn the attack in Cibitoke province that claimed the lives of 24 civilians, including 11 children. We call on all stakeholders to refrain from violence and fully respect human rights.

The Arusha Accords, signed in 2000 after three decades of conflict, remain the cornerstone of stability in Burundi. All dialogue, political reform and action undertaken in Burundi should be based on the principles and spirit of the solid foundations laid by Presidents Nyerere and Mandela. They created a system of constitutional provisions to discourage the concentration of power in a single party or group and to form a unified army. We fear that the proposed constitutional amendments will undermine the achievements of the Accords. We recognize and stress the importance and primary responsibility of the guarantors of the Arusha Accords in safeguarding the spirit that reigned at their adoption.

In conclusion, the Netherlands remains committed to the development and stability of the people of Burundi, while recognizing that only Burundi's stakeholders have the power to bring about lasting peace. We fully support the East African Community and the guarantors of the Arusha Accords in their efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the current crisis.

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful for the briefings delivered by Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Bolivia appreciates and supports the Special Envoy's efforts to continue the inter-Burundian dialogue in an inclusive environment. We also appreciate the efforts to facilitate that goal led by the former President of Tanzania, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, and the President of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Museveni, in accordance with the Arusha Accords, which must remain the cornerstone of that process. We reiterate that dialogue and respect for the Accords are key to enabling Burundi's emergence from its crisis. In that regard, and in view of the fact that Burundi presents no threat to international peace and security, since its situation remains stable, we believe that the road map proposed by Mr. Mkapa should be implemented in order to reach a consensus and create the conditions necessary for a peaceful environment for the next elections, to be held in 2020.

The Security Council, and the international community in general, must act on a basis of respect for Burundi's sovereignty, independence and territorial

integrity. In that regard, we consider that Burundi's referendum and constitutional reform are both internal issues that must be consolidated by Burundians for Burundians. We must take into account the progress made in the negotiations in the inter-Burundian dialogue. We should not forget that there is consensus on several points. It is important to analyse those where there is still a lack of agreement, and the international community should support that dialogue constructively with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement. Burundi's contribution to peace and security through its troop contributions, which demonstrate its institutional capacity, should also be taken into account.

The international community should support Burundi in strengthening its capacities and assisting it with its socioeconomic development and the humanitarian challenges it is facing. In that regard, we commend the tripartite agreement signed by Burundi, Tanzania and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of refugees to Burundi from Tanzania, which prioritized the repatriation of 19,148 refugees. We also encourage the international community to continue funding the humanitarian response programme in Burundi.

In order to overcome these challenges, we need to create an environment of trust, and that means lifting the unilateral sanctions that have negative effects on the lives of vulnerable groups such as women and children and are detrimental to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. We should point out here that such unilateral actions are illegal according to the Charter of the United Nations.

We acknowledge the efforts and work of the East African Community (EAC), the African Union Special Envoy, the Chair of the Burundi configuration and the United Nations country team in Burundi. We encourage them to continue their work and to coordinate their efforts to achieve better cooperation in order to continue supporting the mediation under the auspices of the EAC, which should continue to lead that process.

**Mr. Tumysh** (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their insightful briefings and significant contribution to our deliberations today.

At the outset, we would like to express our deep condolences to the people and the Government of Burundi for the barbaric terrorist attack that took place on 11 May in the north-western province of Cibitoke in Burundi, resulting in the deaths of 26 civilians. We offer our sympathies to the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery. We urge the Government to undertake a thorough investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice. We therefore support the recommendations we heard today from our briefers, and would like to make some observations for the Council's consideration.

First, on the political front, we take note of the 17 May nationwide referendum on amending the Constitution. We hope that the results of that critical event reflect the will of the Burundian people, and will have no negative impact on the country's political and security situation. We reiterate our concern about the minimal progress made in developing the inter-Burundian dialogue. We call on all political actors to engage in meaningful communication, which should include negotiations for the road map aimed at charting a viable path towards the holding of peaceful, free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections in 2020.

That nationally owned process should be held in an environment conducive to dialogue, confidence and nationwide consensus, engaging all key political stakeholders with the aim of ensuring durable peace. We emphasize the importance of the continued efforts of the African Union and the East African Community in the mediation process. We therefore urge the leadership of the subregion and the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement to redouble their efforts in revitalizing political interaction, while engaging all parties. In that regard, we support the personal involvement and commitment of the facilitator, former President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando. We hope that the next round of the inter-Burundian dialogue will be more inclusive and productive, thereby paving the way for the restoration of peace, security and long-term stability in Burundi.

We also note the importance of all political sides implementing the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. We see that as the only key to a peaceful resolution of the country's political crisis. We also emphasize the importance of respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all its citizens.

Secondly, on the humanitarian track, with nearly 180,000 internally displaced persons and 430,000 refugees, together with 3.6 million people in need

of assistance, the current humanitarian situation in Burundi must be urgently addressed. The repatriation of refugees must be voluntary and in accordance with the principles of respect and dignity set forth in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. We commend the signing of the tripartite agreement between representatives of Burundi and Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of additional Burundian refugees from Tanzania.

Thirdly, on the development track, we note the efforts of the Government of Burundi to stabilize the economic situation in the country, including by drafting the national development plan, which will be a significant step forward. International support is therefore critical to assisting the nation to overcome existing economic challenges. That platform could become the basis for confidence-building between Burundi and its partners.

Lastly, we commend the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on playing such a significant coordinating role and for facilitating dialogue between the Government of Burundi and the international community.

**Ms. French** (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Kafando for his briefing. We would also like to thank Ambassador Lauber for his briefing and tireless efforts with the Peacebuilding Commission.

Arbitrary arrests, a lack of transparency, the suspension of media outlets and attempts to put pressure on voters marred Burundi's 17 May referendum process, thereby undermining confidence in its reported outcome. The results leave us concerned that Burundi is moving closer to one-party rule. The referendum took place against the backdrop of stalled progress in the East African Community-led dialogue, continuing repression and an unstable political situation. The referendum further aggravates ongoing acute political tensions, which have destabilizing effects on Burundi and the wider region.

Although the Government allowed vigorous campaigning by the opposition during the designated two-week campaign period, numerous cases of harassment and repression against referendum opponents in the months preceding the voting contributed to a climate of fear and intimidation, resulting in an environment that did not allow for a credible referendum. The absence of independent observers also undermines confidence in the reported result. We also condemn reports of armed groups killing 26 innocent civilians in the days leading up to the referendum. The climate of violence, fear and repression underscores the need for serious dialogue to advance peace.

Restrictions on media worsened in advance of the referendum, further undermining the credibility of the process. We condemn the Government's decision to suspend the broadcasts of Voice of America and the British Broadcasting Corporation during that particularly volatile time. That decision, along with other media restrictions, arbitrary arrests and harsh sentences for human rights defenders, undermines basic democratic norms and signals continuing troubling limitations on civic and political space in Burundi.

We remain concerned that the Government will interpret the revised Constitution as resetting presidential term limits, and that other amendments seek to consolidate the President's power, place restrictions on independent candidates and coalitions of candidates and run counter to the power-sharing principles enshrined in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Such amendments will have long-term impacts on Burundi's governance and institutions.

We recall the ruling party's commitment under the Pretoria Protocol to respect the principles of the Arusha Agreement, including respect for term limits, and expect it to abide by them. The United States is closely tracking the trend of leaders extending their rule by eliminating or extending term limits. We note from experience that, when whole generations of people are denied democracy and fundamental freedoms, instability and insecurity are often the result. It appears that Burundi is following that undemocratic trend, which we fear will lay the foundation for continued instability and political tensions for years to come.

The United States supported and was present at the signing of the Arusha Agreement, which brought an end to years of tragic civil war in Burundi. We believe that parties must continue to respect it in the interests of Burundians and the wider region.

The Government of Burundi must take clear steps to reopen the political space for members of the opposition, independent media and civil society and to engage in inclusive dialogue with Burundian political stakeholders. It is critical that the Government of Burundi participate in good faith in the next session

of the inter-Burundian dialogue. We urge the region to intensify its engagement on Burundi in the post-referendum period to press for a durable political solution to Burundi's political crisis, a reopening of political space and an end to human rights abuses and violations.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): I would very much like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Kafando, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber for their very useful briefings today. I would like to underscore that we fully support their efforts to achieve durable peace and sustainable development in Burundi.

Today's briefings underlined the precarious nature of the current political, economic and humanitarian situation in the country and continued reports of grave human rights violations and abuses. The attack on 11 May, which many have mentioned, killed 26 people in Ruhagarika and further demonstrates that the security situation remains fragile.

The referendum on 17 May was held against that backdrop. We note that the Government allowed some campaigning during the campaign period. However, reports of an overall climate of intimidation, including the closure of certain media outlets in the lead-up to the referendum, demonstrate that conditions for reconciliation and long-lasting political peace and stability are still largely absent. The spirit and key provisions of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi therefore remains relevant and central. They constitute a pillar for peace and stability in Burundi and the entire region. An inclusive political resolution of the current conflict must be found through dialogue. A lack thereof will negatively affect upcoming elections in 2020 and the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation. We fully support greater involvement in East African Community-led mediation efforts under President Museveni and former President Mkapa. We expect the Government to commit fully to the inter-Burundian dialogue.

The efforts of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) are equally important. The PBC remains a unique platform for discussing the situation in the country with Burundi. We strongly support Ambassador Lauber's approach and efforts and hope that the dialogue on socioeconomic issues will contribute to increased confidence between Burundi and its partners. In the short term, addressing the humanitarian situation in Burundi is of paramount importance. Urgent action is needed to alleviate immediate suffering rooted in issues such as food insecurity and protection challenges.

Lastly, continued reports of grave human rights violations and abuses in Burundi remain deeply worrisome. Sweden calls on Burundian authorities to ensure that the three human rights experts mandated by the Human Rights Council can carry out their work in the country unhindered. In addition, we urge Burundi to swiftly agree on a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as with the African Union, with regard to its human rights and military observers. Upholding and respecting human rights and ensuring accountability are critical, nurture trust, strengthen dialogue and reconciliation — and ultimately contribute to durable peace.

**Mr. Djédjé** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando for the quality of his briefing on the sociopolitical situation in Burundi. I also thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, whose recent mission to Burundi has enabled us to follow developments on the ground.

I will focus on the referendum held on 17 May and the outlook for the political process in Burundi. On 17 May, Burundian voters voted in favour of the constitutional reform proposed by the Burundian authorities. Côte d'Ivoire takes note of the provisional results of the referendum, which unquestionably remains a prerogative of the Burundian authorities. However, we regret the lack of consultation with the various sectors of Burundian society, which not only risks widening the split between the ruling coalition and the opposition but may also further undermine the process of national reconciliation in Burundi. Côte d'Ivoire therefore urges the Burundian authorities, in the aftermath of the referendum, to work to create a peaceful sociopolitical climate that will foster a resumption of political dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Accords. The Accords have been the main pillar of peace and stability for more than a decade and brought an end to the country's civil war by establishing a system in which power is shared by Burundi's various ethnic groups.

The stalemate in the inter-Burundian political dialogue is of concern to the entire international community. The fact is that more than six months after the last session of the inter-Burundian dialogue,

conducted in Uganda under the auspices of the East African Community, there has been no significant progress in the political process despite the efforts of the facilitator, Mr. Mkapa. Côte d'Ivoire urges Burundi's stakeholders to resume their dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Accords. We urge them to reject preconditions and unilateral actions in order to create the conditions necessary for a successful resolution of the crisis, through a credible political process leading to democratic and inclusive elections in 2020.

In conclusion, my delegation encourages the East African Community and the mediator and facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue to work for a resumption of the political dialogue. We call on the international community to support all regional and subregional initiatives to that end. We support Special Envoy Kafando and reiterate our readiness to support his continued efforts to help end the crisis in Burundi.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and the briefings of Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. We fully support their efforts.

Peru takes note of the results of the referendum, but regrets that it was organized without independent observers amid complaints of intimidation of the opposition and restrictions on the freedom of the press. We are particularly concerned about the fact that the constitutional amendments promoted by the Government of Burundi and approved in a disputed referendum may undermine important commitments made in the Arusha Accords, which are recognized and supported by the Security Council, designed to safeguard the rights of the Burundian minorities and affecting the delicate governmental balance achieved between the country's various communities after a tragic civil war. In that regard, we should encourage the authorities of Burundi to protect the entire population, including minorities, and to put an end to the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms that unfortunately continue. We also want to underline the need to reject hate speech, to keep all parties committed to the delicate balance that has maintained peace and stability in Burundi for more than a decade, and to prevent any recurrence of acts of violence, especially those that have taken place since 2015.

In the current circumstances, we consider it urgent to ensure that the process of inter-Burundian dialogue can move forward and that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights can resume its activities in Burundi.

Finally, we believe it is important to ensure that the Council follows developments in the country carefully, and that regional organizations and neighbouring countries can also follow developments there more closely and support the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community.

**Mr. Hickey** (United Kingdom): I would first like to thank Mr. Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his very clear and frank briefing, which comes at an important time for Burundi, in the wake the referendum. I should also like to thank Ambassador Lauber, for his thoughtful briefing, particularly the six recommendations he made for international community engagement. I am happy to say that we support all of those very clear and useful recommendations.

The United Kingdom would like to join the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United States, France and other speakers today in expressing our concern about the violence seen in the run-up to the referendum. Human Rights Watch has reported that at least 15 people opposing the referendum have been killed, while six have been raped and eight abducted. We remain very concerned about the restrictions on the political space and the media in the period leading up to the referendum. Regrettably, the preparations for the referendum and the vote itself were held in a climate of intimidation and repression, with a lack of public information on the proposed reforms. We heard today from Special Envoy Kafando about reports of many irregularities by the opposition and from civil society. Such actions only reduce the confidence that the results of the referendum represent the will of the electorate.

We are of the view, in strong agreement with Special Envoy Kafondo, that the Government of Burundi must ensure that the spirit of the Arusha Accords is respected when any constitutional reform is implemented. The current crisis in Burundi can be resolved only by continuing an inclusive dialogue that preserves the Accords. We hope that the implementation of the constitutional amendments will not have any impact on the previous agreements, particularly with regard to ethnic quotas and the representation of women in

the Government. The United Kingdom calls on the African Union and the other guarantors of the Arusha Accords to pay careful attention to preserving them during any implementation of constitutional changes in Burundi. We encourage and support the African Union in its efforts to ensure that the spirit of the Accords is adhered to.

As others have already said today, we remain extremely concerned about the human rights situation in Burundi. We note with concern the points made by the Special Envoy about the expulsion of human rights experts, and we join his call to the Burundian authorities to facilitate their return and cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We continue to call on the Government to implement the two resolutions adopted at the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/36/2 and A/HRC/36/19). We also urge the Government to make progress on the criteria set by the European Union (EU) that would pave the way for a resumption of EU financial assistance to Burundi.

What we have heard today indicates that there is little prospect of an early end to the political crisis or improvement in the humanitarian situation in Burundi. The current situation is unsustainable. We often talk in this Chamber about the importance of conflict prevention. The risks in Burundi are huge, and the case for preventive diplomacy is overwhelming. We therefore join the Peacebuilding Commission's call to the international community to pay close attention to the situation in Burundi, and we strongly encourage the Burundian Government, the East African Community and the African Union to vigorously pursue inclusive dialogue and preserve the gains of the Arusha Accords, which is the only way to ensure peace and security in the country.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his briefing on the constitutional referendum held in Burundi and the development of the situation there. We have taken note of the report of Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). We welcome the configuration's balanced and equidistant approach to the issue of a Burundi-owned settlement, which has made it one of the most trustworthy channels for communication with Bujumbura. We support the PBC's efforts to revitalize cooperation with Burundians by discussing issues related to the country's socioeconomic development and re-establishing donor confidence.

The Russian Federation continues to be of the view that the referendum on 17 May on amending the Constitution is a strictly internal affair for Burundi. As we know, the changes were initiated by the National Commission for the Inter-Burundi Dialogue, which included representatives of various sectors of society, encompassing members of all the parties represented in Parliament, including the opposition, as well as non-parliamentary political associations, the clergy and civil society. The Commission's high level of representativeness, even during the referendum's preparatory stages, has meant that we can say that the people supported the idea of holding the referendum. The results showed an impressive — even unheard-of, among African countries — turnout of 96.24 per cent, with an overwhelming majority of voters — 73.26 per cent — supporting the constitutional amendments. We believe that the referendum took place in calm circumstances and was preceded by a democratic and transparent campaign, despite some problems.

We would like to draw our colleagues' attention to the fact that the alarmist predictions made in this Chamber only a few weeks ago were not justified. On the contrary, in general we see positive momentum in the way the situation in the country is developing. We are not idealizing it, but we also see no reason to get worked up about it, as some of our colleagues have done today. That could send those who do not enjoy support in Burundian society the wrong message about the Security Council's attitude to the situation there.

The reality of the security situation in Burundi is surely testified to by the fact that the seventy-second session of the African Inter-Parliamentary Union will be held in Bujumbura from 22 to 23 May. We urge that be taken into consideration, including when considering the rationale for keeping the Burundian dossier on the Security Council's already overburdened agenda. Ultimately, there are always problems in any country. However, it is important to ensure that the Council considers only those issues that represent a threat to international and regional peace and security. We do not believe that the Council should get embroiled in discussing countries' domestic political situations, usurping the role of other United Nations structures in Geneva, giving someone or other some advice or other on State structure and lecturing them on democracy

and how people should live. Today, unfortunately, we had a lot of people wanting to tell an independent Government what to do. Let us respect ourselves and others. Exercises such as these definitely do nothing to enhance the Security Council's authority in the eyes of African Governments.

**Mr. Zhang Dianbin** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Mr. Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their briefings. We appreciate their efforts to promote peace and stability in Burundi and the region.

The current situation in Burundi is generally stable. The Government has worked actively to preserve national peace and stability and promote economic and social development. It has formulated an national development plan, signed an agreement with Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of refugees and worked with neighbouring countries to encourage the voluntary return of Burundian refugees to their homes. China welcomes those developments. Burundi is an important country in the Great Lakes region, and its stability and development contribute to wider peace and stability in the region. The international community should continue to provide it with constructive assistance. China would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, there must be proper respect for Burundi's national ownership, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. China notes that the Independent National Electoral Commission recently announced the results of the constitutional referendum, with broad participation and nearly three quarters of the population voting in its favour, in a full demonstration of the ability of Burundi's Government and people to properly address relevant issues. The international community should consider the situation in Burundi comprehensively and objectively, respect the country's ownership in handling its affairs and provide constructive assistance with a view to preserving peace and development in the region.

Secondly, there must be continued support for Burundi's political process. We appreciate the positive efforts by regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in exercising their good offices with regard to the issue of Burundi. We support the EAC in taking the lead in that regard.

Thirdly, our priority should be increasing humanitarian assistance to Burundi and supporting its economic and social development. Burundi continues to face humanitarian challenges, owing to a relatively large gap in funding for humanitarian assistance. We hope that international partners will honour their commitments in a timely manner and provide assistance. We call on the relevant international agencies and organizations to resume their economic cooperation and development assistance to the country as soon as possible. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy and the PBC are important bridges for communication between Burundi and the international community. We hope that they will make use of their respective advantages and enhance their communication in cooperation with the Burundian Government. China is ready to continue to support their work.

China has consistently supported Burundi in its peace process and assisted it in its national reconstruction to the best of its ability. We are ready to continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and sustainable development in Burundi.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his briefing on the political situation in Burundi. We have always valued the contribution of the Special Envoy. We also commend Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and appreciate his briefing. It once again demonstrated how useful the work of the PBC is to the Security Council, and how, when it is handled in an effective manner, as Ambassador Lauber has done, the advisory capacity of the PBC is critical to making the Council more effective and, I might add, wiser.

We were able to closely follow the constitutional referendum, which took place on 17 May. We note the generally calm environment during the campaign and the conduct of the referendum, despite reports about allegations of intimidation and repression against opponents of the constitutional changes, which were referred to us both by the Special Envoy and by the Chair of the Burundi configuration. We believe any grievance with regard to the process of the referendum and its

outcome should be addressed through the established legal mechanisms in a more transparent manner.

We are also encouraged to note that the security situation in Burundi still continues to be stable. As the country prepares to embrace the outcome of the referendum, the pressing issue now is how to avoid any erosion in the relatively calm situation that prevails now.

As we have been repeatedly stating, the political impasse in the country can be addressed only through peaceful, inclusive and consensual dialogue. The lack of progress in that regard in the mediation led by the East African Community (EAC)has been of a matter of serious concern. Hence, the rapid re-launching of genuine and inclusive dialogue, under :he auspices of the EAC and with the support of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations on the basis of the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the Constitution of Burundi, is all the more urgent to ensure lasting peace and stability, as well as a better future for Burundi.

We believe, as was also stressed by Ambassador Lauber, that strong coordination and coherence among the EAC, the African Union and the United Nations is key to making progress on the peace process. We urge the Government of Burundi to recommit itself to participating in the dialogue process. All the stakeholders in the crisis in Burundi should also cooperate fully with the facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue and participate in that process in good faith.

The engagement between the international community and the Government of Burundi has to be based on a realistic strategy aimed at supporting strong institutions and creating a conducive climate in which political differences can be addressed without backsliding into the violence of the past. In that regard, the Council should explore new avenues for re-engagement with Burundi in order to address the political impasse. While we welcome and encourage the work of the Chair of the Burundi configuration in serving as a bridge for dialogue between Burundi and the international community, we also recommend exploring discreet diplomacy, in close coordination with the AU and the EAC, to engage the Burundian Government. The cultivation of trust in all of that is critical.

As the political impasse coupled with the continued reduction of international financial assistance has put huge socioeconomic pressure on Burundi, we believe that alleviating the socioeconomic difficulties of the population, as well as addressing the humanitarian situation, should also be an integral part of the re-engagement. Ambassador Lauber's proposals made a while ago are worth looking at carefully and seriously.

On the side of the Government of Burundi, too, we believe that it is important for there to be open-minded engagement with the international community to explain the constitutional reform process and its outcome, the plan for the election in 2020, as well as the commitments to the spirit of the Arusha Agreement.

The Government might also look seriously at the situation with regard to the three human rights experts, mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, which was presented on 28 September 2017 by African countries, including Burundi, in Geneva, and gather the information so that it would be able to garner the necessary assistance to address the capacity gap critically needed in the area.

In conclusion, sustainable peace can be achieved only through a comprehensive solution on the basis of the Arusha Agreements and the Constitution of Burundi. Now that the referendum has passed, we can only hope that there will be readiness on the part of all the relevant stakeholders for frank and genuine dialogue to chart the best way forward.

Burundi is a country that continues to contribute in a significant manner to the peace and security of Somalia, which has huge significance for peace in the Horn of Africa and Africa in general. It is also from that perspective that we look at the need for improved relations between Burundi and the international community. It is our hope that Ambassador Lauber will continue with the very encouraging approach he has adopted and the process he has embarked upon.

**Mr. Almunayekh** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando and the Permanent Representative of Switzerland, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their valuable briefings.

We have followed with interest the efforts made by the Government of Burundi to conclude the referendum on the Constitution, which was held on 17 May 2018, with the participation of the majority of the political parties. According to the preliminary results announced nationally by the Independent National Electoral Commission, 73.26 per cent of voters voted in favour

of the constitutional changes. That is a very high turn out. Indeed, it reflects the ambitions of the Burundian people, despite the relative calm prevailing in Burundi at the time. We hope the presidential elections in 2020 will be conducted in the same environment of calm.

In accordance with that milestone reached in Burundi, we urge the Government to move beyond the present stage and make future plans to promote the well-being of the people of Burundi, whose security and livelihoods have suffered as a result of the political instability over the past two years. We stress the importance of holding an inclusive national dialogue without preconditions in order to allow for the expression of the aspirations of all Burundian people.

In that vein, we highly appreciate the concerted effort made by President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni, the mediator of the political dialogue led by the East African Community (EAC), and Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, its facilitator. We hope that the dialogue will be successful and reach consensus solutions that will ensure the political stability of Burundi. We reaffirm the need for the Government of Burundi to engage with regional and international organizations, namely, the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the EAC, to ensure the desired stability.

We have followed with interest all of the efforts made last year to bring the parties to the conflict in Burundi to the negotiating table in Arusha. Unfortunately, those efforts have not been successful. Therefore, we call for the continuation of such efforts because we believe that no tangible progress in the political process between the opposition and the Government of Burundi can be achieved unless all parties are brought to the same negotiating table to reach consensus and put an end to political polarization and establish the rules for law and security. The only way to achieve such consensus is for all parties to comply with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, which was signed in Tanzania in 2000.

In conclusion. I would like to commend the voluntary return of the Burundian refugees following the tripartite agreement signed among the Government of Burundi and the Government of Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Burundian authorities must redouble their efforts to ensure the refugees' reintegration in society and establish an environment that is conducive to that objective.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their comprehensive briefings.

The situation in Burundi has to be seen in the wider regional context of the Great Lakes region. It risks deepening a humanitarian and refugee crisis in Burundi and its neighbourhood. While thanking international and regional mediators for the efforts so far, we encourage the East African Community and the African Union to increase their commitment to breaking the political impasse and enhancing coordination of their steps in that regard.

We recognize the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, with its provisions on the need for broad political consensus and avoiding concentrating power in a single institution or unit as the main instrument for peace and stability in Burundi and in the region. Poland would like to emphasize the particular role the leaders of neighbouring countries and the Arusha Agreement guarantors have to play in overcoming the causes generating instability in the region.

Poland has concerns about the situation in Burundi, both in the pre-referendum period and in the tense situation after the voting. We are worried about the deterioration of human rights and limitations on political space for members of the opposition, independent media and civil society. We hope that the inter-Burundian dialogue will be continued, as only an inclusive political dialogue can ensure a sustainable and widely acceptable solution.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

**Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you personally and your country, Poland, on your assumption of the rotating presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. You can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation for the remaining days of your mandate. Through you, I would also like to thank the other members of the Council that have always supported respect for the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations in

addressiing the situation in Burundi — although some delegations remain imprisoned or brainwashed in their 2015 rhetoric without moving in parallel with the evolving situation in the country. I would also like to thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, my colleague from Switzerland, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his positive and growing role in the peacebuilding process in my country, Burundi. I cannot help but thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michel Kafando, for his briefing to the Council this morning.

The purpose of my statement is to share with the Security Council the latest developments in Burundi since the Council's previous briefing, three months ago here in the Chamber, on the situation in my country (see S/PV.8189).

On the political front, on 17 May, Burundi concluded its constitutional referendum with resounding success. According to the provisional national results announced on Monday, 21 May by the Independent National Electoral Commission, the "yes" to Burundi's new Constitution won by a large margin, with 73.26 per cent of the vote, as well as with a record participation rate of 96.24 per cent. Through the referendum, the Burundian people demonstrated to the international community their political maturity and their capacity to organize free, transparent and peaceful democratic elections, and especially with a budget made up entirely of Burundian funds.

The referendum and the two-week campaign preceding it took place in very good conditions throughout the country and across the diaspora. No major incidents were reported to the Electoral Commission during the entire process up to election day. The campaign was very lively, pluralistic, colourful and inclusive. In total, in addition to the ruling party, 25 political parties and opposition coalitions participated in a peaceful election campaign throughout the country, with a high sense of political tolerance between those in favour of the "yes" side and those in favour of the "no" side as to the revised Constitution.

By voting 73.26 per cent in favour of the new Constitution with such record participation, the Burundian people once again reaffirmed their sovereignty, unity in diversity, social cohesion, political tolerance, patriotism, bravery and will to definitively take ownership of their country's political, economic and cultural governance. The date of 17 May 2018 will remain an unforgettable red-letter day in Burundi's political history.

My delegation recalls in passing that the constitutional reform that was just successfully completed was the result of broad consultations conducted over more than a year with the Burundian population in all its diversity. That was an exercise aimed at the country's long-term stability, in particular by ending the transitional period under the current 2005 Constitution.

At the substantive level, the new Constitution fully respects the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, to which the Government attaches great importance. All the substantive articles — I repeat, all the substantive articles — of the Arusha Agreement guaranteeing democratic principles, sovereignty, social cohesion, political stability, national unity, social justice, the protection of minorities, ethnic and gender quotas in institutions, term limits and the protection of human rights have been maintained or even strengthened. What is being said about supposed non-respect for the Arusha Agreement is manipulation of opinion and the will of certain outside actors to destabilize our country. That behaviour, which has manifested itself since 2015, is not dead and buried. Of that we are very aware. The people of Burundi remain very vigilant so as to safeguard their unity and cohesion. The degree of patriotism that has developed among Burundians since 2015 will leave no cracks for any attempt from abroad to destabilize the country to exploit it.

So far, only one political actor, the leader of an independent coalition called Amizero y'Abarundi, out of the 26 parties that took part in the elections, has contested, without convincing anyone, the outcome of the referendum. That was done even before the provisional official results were published by the competent body, the Independent National Electoral Commission. It should be recalled that that political actor has never recognized any electoral results since he entered politics. His denial of the results is a repeat offence in that he has denied the results of all the elections in which he has participated. In the event that that recidivist actor does not withdraw his groundless challenge, wisdom and the rule of law quite naturally oblige him to comply with the electoral code by using the competent legal mechanisms for litigating electoral disputes.

A few delegations in the Chamber today made statements taking shots at the recently concluded referendum process. They are the same delegations that put forward alarmist scenarios before the referendum, which nevertheless, fortunately, took place under very good conditions. I would say to those delegations that the referendum is a victim of its own success.

With regard to media coverage of the referendum, my delegation commends the outstanding synergy between the public and private media. As soon as polling stations opened, 15 public and private radio stations provided live coverage of the elections in real time in the four most widely spoken languages in Burundi. That ongoing media presence reinforced the degree of transparency of the voting, as did the major presence of the political representatives of each party and political coalition in all polling stations — with the right to confirm the results of the voting operations after counting the votes.

Speaking of the media, I would note that Burundi was recently unfairly and prematurely condemned by some of its partners for having temporarily suspended the broadcasting of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Voice of America for flagrant violations of journalism standards. After a rigorous investigation, the BBC World Service, in its 11 May letter addressed to the President of Burundi's National Communication Council, acknowledged that journalists involved in arranging and conducting an interview with a guest who had ties to the Burundian radical opposition had acted in violation of the professional ethics and strict rules of the BBC.

After the admission of the facts, the management of the BBC presented its official apology to the National Communication Council in its 11 May letter. In the same letter, the BBC undertook to spare no effort to ensure that such breaches of journalistic ethics would not recur in future. The National Council of Communication of welcomed the apology of the BBC and awaits the follow-up to the right of reply that BBC radio promised the Government of Burundi to quickly close this issue in a constructive spirit. My delegation encourages the Voice of America, which recognized in its 18 May letter that it had broadcast biased information on Burundi, to do the same.

With regard to dialogue as a means of peacebuilding and the peaceful resolution of political disputes, Burundi reiterates its commitment to peacebuilding, unity, stability, social cohesion, national harmony, the rule of law and the ongoing democratic order through sustained dialogue.

With regard to the security situation, Burundi remains firmly committed to peace, stability and national reconciliation. The security situation is generally stable throughout Burundi. The successful holding of a free, transparent, democratic and peaceful constitutional referendum and the organization, from 22 to 23 May, of the seventy-second session of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union in Bujumbura bear witness to that. At the end of its session, the African Parliamentary Union welcomed the positive developments in the political, security and social situation in Burundi. It believes that the normalization of the general situation in the country should push our European Union partners to normalize their relations with Burundi by lifting the economic sanctions, which are unfairly causing difficulties for the Burundian people. The African Parliamentary Union also regrets the poor understanding of the political, social and security situation in Burundi following disinformation campaigns that currently permeate the international community. During his statement to the press, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union stated, among other things, that "what is being said about Burundi and what we see on the ground is different". He said that what they had found was "a viable and peaceful Burundi — a country that needs support in its reconciliation and development efforts".

With regard to bilateral cooperation with our partners, Burundi reiterates its commitment to strengthening its mutually beneficial friendly and cooperative relations with both traditional and non-traditional partners in a spirit of constructiveness and mutual respect. We must together turn the page on 2015 and set ourselves towards Burundi's future, in particular towards peaceful elections in 2020. We wish for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Burundi living in harmony with its neighbours and the other nations of the world.

In the area of human rights, Burundi continues its efforts to promote and protect human rights from both legislative and institutional perspectives. Here and now, we reaffirm our full cooperation with the international community in protecting and promoting human rights in accordance with the ground rules established in the Charter of the United Nations.

With regard to the return of refugees, the voluntary repatriation movement that began in 2016 is continuing at a satisfactory pace with the arrival of several thousand citizens who had taken refuge in Tanzania in particular. To date more than 200,000 Burundians have already returned home on a voluntary basis. Burundi expects 72,000 returnees by the end of this year, mainly from Tanzania.

On the humanitarian front, Burundi hopes that any support from the international community will be primarily directed to the development efforts under way in the country. Humanitarian aid should be limited to people in emergency situations.

I cannot conclude my statement without reiterating our urgent request to remove Burundi from the Security Council agenda. There are no objective criteria that justify keeping Burundi on the Council's agenda, per the provisions of the Charter, which everyone is familiar with. We are not asking for preferential treatment. Rather, we are asking that Burundi be treated fairly like the other Members, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The current situation in Burundi in no way poses a threat to international peace and security — the main mission of the Security Council. On the contrary, Burundi participates actively and admirably in peacekeeping missions around the world, with more than 6,000 men and women deployed, mainly in Somalia and the Central African Republic. Our participation in peace missions is to pay back the international community, which stood by Burundi in the dark moments of its history before the rebirth of democracy in 2005. The time and energy allocated to Burundi should be directed to other areas of conflict and tension, which are increasingly numerous. I ask the Council to listen to us and consider our appeal. Otherwise, history will remember that Burundi was kept on its agenda above and beyond the criteria established by the United Nations Charter, and that risks creating a dangerous precedent.

**The President**: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*